

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood®
Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge Grant
Final Report

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship Program, with funding from the Race to the Top Early Learning Grant, was the vehicle used to deliver uniquely targeted scholarships throughout North Carolina's early education workforce and system. All of the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship activities have the common, shared goal of increasing the education, compensation and retention of its participants in their approved employment settings. In order to accomplish the goals contained within the RttT-ELC proposal, T.E.A.C.H. had to create new scholarships as well as enhance specific scholarship components to support the continuing education of the early care and education workforce in selected under-resourced counties, otherwise known as the Transformation Zone. Additionally, uniquely designed scholarship opportunities were aimed towards infant toddler teachers, program administrators, home visitors, technical assistance professionals, higher education faculty and early childhood leadership staff.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® has been the umbrella for the following Race to the Top Early Learning Grant funded scholarship activities:

(12.2.3) T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Community Specialists Scholarship Program

(12.2.10) T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Foundations of Infant Toddler Care Scholarship Program

(12.2.14) T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Enhanced Scholarships in Transformation Zone Counties

(12.2.16) T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Masters in Leadership and Program Administration

RTT/ELC Activity Name: T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Community Specialists Scholarship Program

RTT/ELC Project #: 12.2.3

Project Description - A new scholarship model was developed to increase access to relevant early childhood and child development focused coursework to individuals working on behalf of young children in the early care and education system such as home visitors, coaching, mentoring, technical assistance and other professional development staff who have not been eligible for T.E.A.C.H. scholarships in the past. The scholarship activity will support up to 100 early care and community specialists to take coursework leading towards associate or bachelor's degrees in early childhood education or child development.

Outcome Number From Proposal	Activity Number From Proposal	Outcome	Actual
1	1	At the conclusion of 2015, 90% of early care and education community specialist scholarship recipients will have completed an average of 12 credit hours towards an associate or bachelor's degree in early childhood after one contract period.	At the conclusion of 2015, 52% (13 of 25) of early care and education community specialist had completed an average of 12 credit hours towards an associate or bachelor's degree in early childhood after one contract period. Of the 25 scholarship recipients who completed contracts by December 31, 2015, five completed a contract at the associate's level, six completed at the bachelors level, and 2 at a graduate level.
2	1	At the conclusion of 2015, 90% of early care and education community specialists' scholarship recipients completing their contract will be retained with their sponsoring employer.	At the conclusion of 2015, 88% (22 of 25) of early care and education community specialists' scholarship recipients completing their contract were retained with their sponsoring employer.
Output Number From Proposal	Activity Number From Proposal	Output	Actual
1	1	At the conclusion of 2015, 100 scholarships awarded to early care and education community specialists to increase their education.	At the conclusion of 2015, 25 recipients were awarded scholarships.

Output Number From Proposal	Activity Number From Proposal	Output	Actual
2	1	At the conclusion of 2015, 40 colleges/universities attended by early care and education community specialist scholarship participants.	At the conclusion of 2015, early care and education community specialist scholarship participants attended 15 different colleges/universities. Recipients attended the following colleges/universities: Alamance Community College, Caldwell Community College, Catawba College, Cleveland Community College, College of the Albemarle, Isothermal Community College, Mitchell Community College, Mount Olive College, North Carolina Central University, Stanly Community College, Wake Tech Community College, Western University, UNC Wilmington, UNC Chapel Hill, and UNC Greensboro.
3	1	At the conclusion of 2015, 8 outreach activities for the early care and education community specialist scholarship model.	At the conclusion of 2015, 33 outreach activities for the Early Care and Education Community Specialist scholarship model were completed by using I-contact and direct outreach. Outreach included direct contact to CCR&R's Smart Start Agencies, Head Start, NC Community College Associate Degree Programs, Early Intervention Programs, Nurse Educators, Child Care Program Nutritionist and DCDEE. E-mail blast using I-contact was also sent 4 different times.
New	1	At the conclusion of 2015, 100 TEACH Scholarship payments will be issued within 3 weeks upon receipt of appropriate documentation.	At the conclusion of 2015, 74 scholarship payments were within 3 weeks upon receipt of appropriate documentation.

	Activity Number From Proposal	Output	Actual
New	1	At the conclusion of 2015, two proactive contacts will be made to each scholarship recipients each semester or within each 6-month period.	At the conclusion of 2015, two proactive contacts were made to each scholarship recipient each semester.
New	1	At the conclusion of 2015, 100 Grade reports will be collected from each active scholarship recipient each semester.	At the conclusion of 2015, 73 grade reports collected from each active recipient each semester.

Successes

- 80% (20 of 25) of participants maintained a GPA average of 3.5 or higher.
- 88% (22 of 25) of participants remained employed at their sponsoring agency.
- 3 recipients received an Associates Degree while participating on scholarship.
- 3 recipients received a Bachelor's Degree while participating on scholarship.

Challenges

- It was expected that the development and requirement of the EEC technical assistance endorsement would make this scholarship more attractive and necessary to potential participants.
- During October 2013 we were challenged by the government shutdown.
- We received feedback from recipients that the stipend award amount was not sufficient to cover both tuition and books.
- Low applicant response from recruitment.
- Receiving grades in a timely manner and returned contact phone calls were challenges.

Lessons Learned

- The stipend award amounts may not be sufficient to adequately cover both tuition and books costs for recipients.
- Recipients who actively participated were not able to finish receiving support when the program ended and to many these was a barrier to finish their degree.

Recommendations

- Increase stipend amounts so that it covers books and tuition.
- Include this option in the regular T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship contract in order to allow continued support for those who work with early childhood programs.

RTT/ELC Activity Name: T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® NC Foundations of Infant Toddler Care and Scholarships

RTT/ELC Project #: 12 .2.10

Project Description - The NC-FITC Activity was originally designed to prepare a cohort of 100 highly qualified infant-toddler mentor-teachers across NC who would, in turn, provide mentoring to ECE students completing practicum or student teaching requirements and/or infant-toddler teachers seeking mentoring support as part of a quality improvement plan. The mentoring component of the scholarship was dropped as a requirement when applicant feedback indicated it was a barrier to participation due to the long term commitment it required after successful completion of the two NC-FITC courses for a total of 6 college credits. Only a few NC-FITC scholarship recipients (n=3) actually chose to apply for the **optional** formal mentor activity. All formal mentoring activities were completed in the mentor's classroom and all those mentored were ECE students. Requirements for approved mentors included documentation of ERS classroom scores higher than 4. Each teacher or director who completed the two NC-FITC courses successfully (n=30) demonstrated increased knowledge and skills to be able to mentor others on the topics covered. Students were recently surveyed. Of the 18 who responded, 15 remain in their programs; three others moved to new programs to take administrator positions. The project design was revised again to offer scholarships to two groups of ECE professionals who were interested in the content and resources available through NC-FITC to enhance their ability to support the infant-toddler workforce to understand and implement high quality infant-toddler group care practices. Those community college instructors and technical assistance professionals who completed NC-FITC Institutes (n=55) have the potential to impact many ECE students and/or infant-toddler teachers and administrators each year in their professional roles.

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® **NC-FITC Scholarship, a second component of the activity**, was originally designed to support the instruction and preparation of a cohort of 100 highly qualified infant-toddler mentor-teachers across NC through the provision of an educational scholarship. Subsequently the T.E.A.C.H. scholarship recipient population was expanded to also include community college faculty and technical assistance professionals in order to support the activities changes. The T.E.A.C.H scholarship provided financial support for 100% of tuition costs at Meredith College, included a release time reimbursement stipend to the participant's employing child care program in exchange for attendance at face to face meetings and provided bonuses to participants deemed eligible by the Project Instructor.

Outcome Number From Proposal	Activity Number From Proposal	Outcome	Actual
5	3	By December 31, 2015, 85% of NC-FITC scholarship recipients will successfully complete their mentoring requirements and be retained in their infant-toddler setting.	N/A due to approved changes to project design described above.

Outcome Number From Proposal	Activity Number From Proposal	Outcome	Actual
6	3	At the conclusion of 2015, 95% of infant-toddler teachers or ECE students receiving support from a mentor/teacher and completing an evaluation will report that they used one or more strategies provided by their mentor to improve the quality of care in an infant and/or toddler care program.	N/A due to approved changes to project design described above.
New	3	At the conclusion of 2015, 90% of infant-toddler teachers who receive mentoring as part of a quality improvement plan will score 4 points or higher on an ERS assessment after participation.	N/A due to approved changes to project design described above.
New	3	At the conclusion of 2015, 95% of Community College instructors attending a NC-FITC Institute will successfully complete the course and participate in Community of Practice (COP) events after course completion to continue support for the integration of FITC course content and resources into NC Community College AAS degree coursework.	At the conclusion of 2015, 100% of Community College instructors (n=34) attending a NC-FITC Institute successfully completed the course and 97% participated in COP events following course completion. Note: The instructors who enrolled for the FITC course represented 25 out of the 58 NC Community Colleges.
New	3	At the conclusion of 2015, 95% of TA professionals attending a NC-FITC Institute will successfully complete the course demonstrating enhanced knowledge of high quality infant toddler group care practices, policies and resources as well as strategies to support infant toddler teachers and administrators through their technical assistance work.	At the conclusion of 2015, 100% of TA professionals (n=21) attending a NC-FITC Institute successfully completed the course.

Successes

- Two birth to three focused college credit bearing courses were developed. NC Foundations of Infant Toddler Care (FITC) I and II include content based on the Program for Infant Toddler Care (PITC), the Social Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (SEFEL) Pyramid Model, and the NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development (NC FELD).
- Scholarships were provided that made it possible for a total of 85 teachers, administrators, community college instructors and technical assistance professionals to complete birth to three focused coursework and receive support from the instructor, a highly qualified infant-toddler specialist, to share what they learned with others.
- Students in each FITC cohort made connections within their cohorts that created a community of practice and network of support focused on group care of infants and toddlers.
- The NC Community College instructors who participated in the FITC Institute validated the need for additional birth to three resources and support to integrate this content into coursework to enhance AAS degree students' knowledge and skills related to group care of infants and toddlers in addition to children over age 3. Almost all (97%) participated in COP events after course completion with the FITC Instructor where they reported interest in additional professional development opportunities for themselves and their colleagues in birth to three related topics.
- Students reported increased knowledge of how to use NC FELD and appreciation for access to the wealth of new information and resources on birth to three made available to support them in their various professional roles.

Challenges

- Teachers and directors who participated in the courses that used a hybrid approach struggled to stay on track to complete the self-directed on-line modules and submit assignments as expected. This required more support from the instructor than anticipated, and some were still not successful.
- As adjustments were made to the original target group (teachers) for this activity, courses and assignments had to be revised to meet the needs of groups added (directors, community college instructors, and technical assistance professionals). This work was time consuming and had to be done as courses were being taught. The two new courses adapted for the Institutes had to be approved by our higher education partner, Meredith College, for credit.
- Webinars were used to deliver several FITC I and II course modules as the activity budget did not support a more effective technology option. The resulting challenges related to connectivity issues and the limitations of the webinar format.

Lessons Learned

- Using a hybrid format for actual presentation of materials was not as successful as we had hoped it would be. Students seemed to prefer the face to face experience and many struggled with time management of self-directed modules. Webinars and conference calls may work better for discussions that include opportunities for each student to share their experiences using the content and skills learned in each self-directed module and receive feedback from the instructor.
- Recruitment for this activity required a variety of strategies such as bulk mailing, cold calls to sites, presentations at meetings, email blasts and word of mouth.

- Including the mentoring component as a requirement for the original scholarship offered to teachers was a barrier for potential applicants due the overall time commitment. Applicants were interested in learning more about the foundations of infant toddler care, but they may not have been ready to see themselves as mentors. Even after developing skills related to supporting another adult's learning (part of FITC II), some remained reluctant to take on the role of mentor in any formal way.
- Other students who were willing to explore formal mentor opportunities were unable to make connections to local colleges or other IHEs to find students to mentor. Making connections to create a system for linking mentors to students was not part of the original activity design and thus efforts to do so were delayed and not as effective as hoped.
- Offering courses to community college instructors and technical assistance professionals better supported our goal of having FITC materials more widely distributed as a foundation of infant toddler care to those who are currently working or will be entering the ECE workforce, and ensuring sustainability of the material.

Recommendations

- Increase support for the delivery of high quality professional development opportunities using FITC materials and resources to ECE professionals including licensing consultants, child care health consultants, TA professionals, community college instructors and child care administrators. These are some of the many stakeholders who play a key role in improving the quality of infant toddler care who most often have limited knowledge of the unique needs of children birth to three in group care settings or strategies for supporting infant toddler teachers to implement evidence based practices that support positive child outcomes.
- Provide support that would increase access to CEU events based on FITC content for teachers working directly with infants and toddlers at minimal cost to them. Even when teachers have ECE degrees they often enter the workforce unprepared to work with infants and toddlers. NC workforce studies confirm that infant toddler teachers have lower education levels and are paid the least when compared to preschool teachers. Improving the quality of infant toddler care and positive outcomes for children depends on an effective workforce and requires a larger investment in their ability to participate in specialized continuing education (CEUs) opportunities that can increase their birth to three focused knowledge and skills.
- Support the Infant Toddler QE Project to pilot strategies that link completion of training based on FITC content to eligibility for in-classroom coaching to promote sustainable positive changes in practice and a culture of continuous improvement.
- Support incentives to community colleges to add birth to three focused courses and require all ECE students to complete a practicum in an infant toddler setting.
- Support the development of CEU modules for potential infant toddler mentor teachers and create a system to link willing mentor teachers with the community colleges.

RTT/ELC Activity Name: Enhanced Scholarships in the Transformation Zone Counties

RTT/ELC Project #: 12 .2.14

Project Description - In order to provide additional incentives to early childhood providers in the Transformation Zone eligible counties, this activity assumes the sponsoring employer's share of the compensation required for existing T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Associate and/or Bachelor's Degree Scholarship Programs. This encourages increased participation by significantly reducing the costs for employers and thereby making the support for professional development more affordable. This activity allows up to 176 sponsoring employer's share of the compensation to be assumed by the T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project.

Output Number From Proposal	Activity Number From Proposal	Output	Actual
1	4	At the conclusion of 2015, 100 scholarship recipients who work in Transformation Zone eligible counties will receive an enhanced T.E.A.C.H scholarship that pays the sponsoring center's bonus for contract completion.	At the conclusion of 2015, 123 scholarship recipients who worked in the T-Zone eligible counties received a T.E.A.C.H. enhanced scholarship.
Outcome Number From Proposal	Activity Number From Proposal	Outcome	Actual

7	4	At the conclusion of 2015, 90% of teachers and family providers working in the Transformation Zone eligible counties and receiving a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Associate or Bachelor's Degree scholarship will complete an average of 12 credit hours after one contract period.	At the conclusion of 2015, 58% of teachers and family providers working in the Transformation Zone eligible counties and receiving a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Associate or Bachelor's Degree scholarship and who completed contracts by December 31, 2015, completed an average of 14 credit hours. However, the overall average number of credits hours completed by the entire population of teachers and family providers working in the Transformation Zone eligible counties, receiving a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Associate or Bachelor's Degree scholarship and who completed a contract is 13.7 credits per year.
8	4	At the conclusion of 2015, 90% of teachers and family providers working in the Transformation Zone eligible counties and completing a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Associate or Bachelor's Degree scholarship contract will be retained with their sponsoring employer.	At the conclusion of 2015, 99% of teachers and family providers working in the Transformation Zone eligible counties and receiving a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Associate or Bachelor's Degree scholarship and who completed contracts were retained with their sponsoring employer
New	4	At the conclusion of, 2015, 90% of teachers and family providers working in the Transformation Zone eligible counties and receiving a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Associate or Bachelor's Degree scholarship will maintain a GPA of at least 2.5.	At the conclusion of 2015, 70% of teachers and family providers working in the Transformation Zone eligible counties and receiving a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Associate or Bachelor's Degree scholarship maintained a GPA of at least 2.5. However, the overall average GPA of teachers and family providers working in the Transformation Zone eligible counties and receiving a T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Associate or Bachelor's Degree scholarship was 2.95.

Successes

- Enhanced T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® scholarships in the Transformation Zone eligible counties were awarded to 123 scholarship recipients
 - 112 Associate Degree Scholarships
 - 4 Bachelor's Degree Scholarships
 - 7 Birth-Kindergarten Scholarships
- These recipients were sponsored by 65 different child care facilities.
- Recipients worked in facilities from 16 of the 17 Transformation Zone eligible counties.

Transformation Zone County	# of Enhanced T.E.A.C.H. Scholarship recipients at the conclusion of 2015
Beaufort	36
Bertie	7
Camden	3
Chowan	2
Edgecombe	4
Greene	4
Halifax	10
Hertford	8
Hyde	5
Lenoir	16
Martin	4
Northampton	5
Perquimans	1
Vance	12
Warren	4
Washington	2
Total	123

- Recipients successfully completed an average of 13.7 credits per completed contract
- 99% of recipients were retained by their sponsoring facility.
- Recipients had an overall GPA of 2.95

Challenges

- The primary challenge of the Enhanced Scholarships in the T-Zone eligible counties involved the employers that were already sponsoring T.E.A.C.H. scholarships. Traditional T.E.A.C.H. scholarships have two options: a raise model and a bonus model. Because the Enhanced Scholarship was a bonus model, there were some challenges associated with explaining to employers the value of switching to the bonus option if they were currently sponsoring the raise model.

Lessons Learned

- The outcomes of the T-Zone participants mirror that of the general T.E.A.C.H. population. The enhanced scholarship may have encouraged new recipients and sponsors. When this activity was first launched, we

started with 73 recipients and 45 sponsoring centers. Over the length of the activity, we were able to increase the number of recipients to 123 and the number of sponsoring centers to 65. It remains to be seen as to whether recipients and sponsors will continue scholarship participation now that the enhanced scholarship is no longer available.

Recommendations

- Since the enhanced scholarship model did not necessarily lead to a significantly greater number of scholarships awarded, it is uncertain as to if it should be recommended as a long-standing model. Since T.E.A.C.H. scholarships are already comprehensive in offering benefits to both recipients and sponsors, it is not recommended that we continue this activity. However, the T.E.A.C.H. program is actively exploring ways to make the scholarship program more enticing to all sponsoring facilities across the state.

RTT/ELC Activity Name: Master's Degree in Leadership and Program Administration

- RTT/ELC Project #: 12 .2.16

-
-

Project Description - A new scholarship for child care administrators and community-based early childhood organization leadership staff that are working towards the new state Master's Degree in Early Childhood Program Leadership and Management will be designed. This activity will support 150 child care administrators and community-based early childhood organization leadership staff with a scholarship to help with coursework leading towards the new Master's Degree in Early Childhood Program Leadership and Management.

Outcome Number From Proposal	Activity Number From Proposal	Outcome	Actual
3	2	By December 31, 2015, 90% of Master's Degree scholarship recipients will have completed an average of 12 credit hours towards the Master's Degree in Early Childhood Leadership and Management after one contract period.	At the conclusion of 2015, 99% of Master's Degree scholarship recipients who completed contracts by December 31, 2015, completed an average of 17 credit hours.
4	2	By December 31, 2015, 90% of Master's Degree scholarship recipients will be retained with their sponsoring employer.	At the conclusion of 2015, 93% of Master's Degree scholarship recipients were retained with their sponsoring employer.
New	2	At the conclusion of 2015, 90% of Master's Degree Scholarship recipients will have maintained a GPA of at least 3.0	At the conclusion of 2015, 98% of Master's Degree scholarship recipients maintained a GPA of at least 3.0.

-
-
-
-

Successes

- The University of North Carolina at Wilmington and the University of North Carolina at Greensboro developed an online master's degree program to support T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Scholarship master recipients.
- Scholarships were awarded to 155 child care administrators and community-based early childhood organization leadership staff.
- Almost all (98%) of scholarship recipients maintained a GPA of 3.0 or greater.
- Almost all (99%) of scholarship recipients completing one contract completed an average of 17 credit hours.
- Students submitting grade reports completed a combined total of 1,715 credit hours.

Challenges

- After registering for courses for an upcoming semester the course codes would often change at UNC Wilmington resulting in students having to re-register for a course. This also required additional support from T.E.A.C.H. and the student accounts office to ensure that revised authorizations were sent and accounts noted appropriately.
- Staff at the student accounts office at UNC Wilmington expressed concerned about students being non-responsive to electronic communications regarding their enrollment status and payment deadlines. This often resulted in late registration fees, dropped and course reinstatement.
- Recipients withdrawing from the scholarship reported the challenge of balancing online courses, employment, family dynamics and academic performances as their reasons for no longer continuing.

Lessons Learned

- Interest for admissions at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro continued to be strong but only a maximum number of students were accepted at the conclusion of 2015. Students who were interested in attending UNCG should have applied immediately after learning of the scholarship opportunity.
- Scholarship recipients should be realistic about the demands of pursuing a master's degree. Many of the recipients not continuing on scholarship were not able to due to difficulties balancing school, work and family.

Recommendations

- Recommend the Master's Degree Scholarship be a continued scholarship model as recipients supported through the RttT funds are still seeking their MEd.
- Include the Master's Degree Scholarship model in the upcoming T.E.A.C.H. proposal to be funded as a regular scholarship model.